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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this highly quantitative study is to manifest the direct effects of communicative learning in the context of public high school teaching in Japan. A small-scale (n=12) experiment was conducted to reveal intergroup differences. The experiment was based on the assumption that there are clear differences in the amount of input from and kinds of interaction with native speakers of English in a communications-based learning environment and a traditional, regular learning environment. Preliminary assessment of the academic and attitudinal levels of the subjects enabled the selection of six matched pairs from the two learning environments. The subjects' semi-spontaneous interactions with the native speakers in six quasi-realistic contexts were videotaped and transcribed. The data analysis focused on three aspects of their communicative behaviors: discourse-related, functional, and formal. It was found that communicative learning does enhance learner performance but not in the way it has been generally assumed or expected. Rather than making the learners more fluent, as might be expected, the direct effects identified were the following: more active involvement in interactions, provision of richer information, greater degree of encoding, and more extensive use of clause-containing and minimal/phrasal acts. (Contains 17 references.) (KFT)

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Direct Effects of School-Based Communicative Learning

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to manifest direct effects of communicative learning in the context of public high school teaching in Japan. A small-scale experiment was conducted to reveal intergroup differences. It was based on the assumption that there are clear differences in the amount of input from and kinds of interaction with native speakers of English (NSs) in a communication-based learning environment and a traditional, regular learning environment. Preliminary assessment of the academic and attitudinal levels of the subjects enabled the selection of six matched pairs from the two learning environments. The subjects' semi-spontaneous interactions with NSs in six quasi-realistic contexts were videotaped and transcribed. The data analyses focused on three aspects of their communicative behaviors: discourse-related, functional and formal. It is found that communicative learning does enhance learner performance but not the way it has been generally assumed or expected.

Introduction

Although communication-stressed teaching has recently gained increasing popularity in public school language pedagogy in Japan, little research has been conducted into its *direct* effect on the development of students' communicative skills. Claims made of its positive contributions are intuitively appealing but are, in most cases, of an impressionistic and indirect type and lack empirical support: e.g., higher motivation (Shimotsu et al., 1998, p. 1), better phonological familiarity (Oka & Yoshida, 1997, p. 7) and the greater number of STEP test examinees (Niisato, 1996, p.13).

A remark made by Hammond (1988, p. 412), though based on a view that is unrelated to the Japanese context, deserves attention. He said that one of the major errors we have committed in the second and foreign language teaching profession is that of leading students to believe that they can become fluent speakers of second language in a two- or four-year period. To improve the quality of communication-based instruction, the first thing to do is show direct outcomes of communicative learning. This is the aim of the present study.

Background

Hachinohe Commercial High School offers three curricula: the International Economics, the Commercial and the Information Processing Curricula. What differentiates the International Economics Curriculum from the others is a rich communication-based environment. While the Commercial and the Information Processing students only receive formal instruction during the first two years, the International Economics students not only receive formal instruction but also take a communication-based course named ***Business Communication in English***. This course is taught by the assistant language teacher (ALT), two or three Japanese teachers of English, and a teacher of commercial education. The textbook allows a wide coverage of situations that business people might encounter. Memorization of dialogues is often encouraged, but the emphasis is always placed on meaningful and creative use of language.

One of the greatest moments for the International Economics students is a school trip abroad, which is held during the second semester of the second year. They visit the United States and enjoy a four-day trip schedule, including home-stay, local high school visit, self-planned

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group tour and shopping. Approximately a month prior to their departure, a one-day special English lesson is held, in which about ten ALTs are invited to help check whether each student can communicate well in a series of simulations. In sum, the International Economics students are provided with abundant opportunities for communication in classroom, traveling and recreational settings. It can thus be taken for granted that, by the end of the second year, their communicative skills should have grown superior to the other groups'. The primary focus of the present study is to identify direct effects of the communicative learning environment through intergroup differences in communicative performance.

Review of Literature

Although some empirical classroom-based studies have been conducted to examine the effects of communicative learning, the results have not always been consistent, especially when it comes to gains in grammatical knowledge and accuracy. Savignon (1972, cited in 1983), comparing the grammatical and communicative skill development of three college French learning groups, discovered that the group with communicative training showed superiority in the development of communicative skills, but not of linguistic skills in different measurements. In another study conducted by Montgomery and Eisenstein (1985), junior college ESL students were divided into two groups: those who received formal instruction and real world communicative practice, and those who received only formal instruction. Based on an oral interview task, the researchers concluded the former group made the greatest improvement in grammatical accuracy. Likewise, Hammond (1988), who compared groups of college Spanish learners taught by means of the Natural Approach and the grammar-translation method, reported that the Natural Approach groups performed as well or better than their counterparts on discrete-point written examinations that stressed grammatical accuracy.

While the employment of different measurements could account for the disparity in the interpretation of data obtained, such inconclusiveness may be taken as evidence that other criteria should be used beyond grammar-related outcomes of learning. Kitajima (1997), focusing on potential effects of the learning environment (or learning priority) in regard to the use of communicative strategies, found that, in description and narration tasks, meaning-focused learners used fewer strategies for communication reduction and more strategies for communication achievement. Kitajima also pointed out that the meaning-focused learners tended to analyze meaning units within the context of a particular communicative task, so that they expressed their meaning more accurately and effectively than form-focused learners. This study sheds light on the use of context-proper communicative strategies, which is beyond the scope of a grammar-focused analysis. However, there are still grounds on which the study can be challenged; it only took account of the actual language use in communication of a *unilateral* nature, and learner language seems to have been regarded as monologue. The present study will observe learners' verbal behaviors embedded in face-to-face communication of a dynamic, *interactive* nature (Hall, 1995), with foci placed on discourse-related, functional and formal aspects of language performance.

Experimental Design

Subjects

Twelve female students were deliberately selected for this study: 6 second-year students from the International Economics Curriculum for the experimental group, and another 6 from the Information Processing Curriculum for the control group. Preliminary assessment of their motivation level and academic level of English as an academic subject was conducted based on an attitude-related questionnaire administered previously, and the mean scores of the

first and second term final examinations of English. They were considered to be at almost the same levels of motivation and academic performance.

Procedure

A dilemma-solving role-play task called *Strategic Interaction* (DiPietro, 1987, see Appendix 1) was administered to the two groups at the end of the second year. Three NSs were involved in this experiment; two of them were ALTs, and the other was an exchange student from the United States who was attending another local high school. The subjects' interactions with the NSs in 6 quasi-realistic situations (see Appendix 2) were videotaped and transcribed for subsequent data analyses.

Data analyses

In the data analyses, the terms, *act*, *encoded act* and *encoded move* will be used. The *act* originally refers to the smallest interactive unit in the discourse which signals what the speaker intends and what s/he wants to communicate (Coulthard, 1977, p. 104; Stenstrom, 1994, p. 30). In this study, silence, hesitation and pause are also counted as acts. *Encoded acts* are defined as what the speaker expresses by means of any language form, ranging from a single word to a complex sentence, with a particular function carried. Notice that silence, hesitation and pauses are excluded from this category. Moves are defined as what the speaker does in a conversational turn, consisting of one or more acts (Stenstrom, 1994, p. 30), so *encoded moves* are defined here as encoded acts, single or combined, boxed off for a sentence-based grammatical analysis. See the following example that is extracted from one of the control group's interactions with the NSs.

NS1-1: I bought this CD player
NS1-2: and it doesn't work
NS1-3: so can I have money back?
NS1-4: I don't want this
SU1-1: ....(silence as a sign of incomprehension)
NS2-1: It doesn't work.
NS2-2: It's broken
NS2-3: and I have to hurry.

NS stands for a native speaker, and SU stands for a subject. Each line shows a token of an act. SU1-1, which is a piece of silence, is counted as an act. NS1-1, NS1-2, NS1-3 and NS1-4 are regarded as four separate encoded acts, each carrying its own function, with NS1-1 providing information (i.e., the NS, a customer, bought the CD player), NS1-2 providing information (i.e., it doesn't work), NS1-3 requesting an action (i.e., the NS wants the SU, a salesclerk, to give her money back), NS1-4 providing information (i.e., the NS doesn't want the CD player). They are, however, considered as a three coordination containing moves, with the first coordination consisting of NS1-1 and NS1-2 with *and* intervening, the second of NS1-2 and N1-3 with the word *so* intervening, and the third of NS1-3 and NS1-4 (with *for* supposed to be missing between them). The frequencies of act and encoded act occurrence are shown in Table 1.1 and Table 1.2.

Table 1.1. The Frequency of Act Occurrence

Interlocutors	Situation	Experimental Group			Control Group		
		N of Self-Produced Acts	N of All Acts	%	N of Self-Produced Acts	N of All Acts	%
Subjects	1	42	119	(35.29)	51	122	(41.80)
	2	29	64	(45.31)	13	48	(27.08)
	3	45	105	(42.86)	52	134	(38.81)
	4	28	75	(37.33)	14	73	(19.18)
	5	18	53	(33.96)	15	33	(45.45)
	6	40	79	(50.63)	31	107	(28.97)
	Mean of %			(40.90)			(33.55)
Native Speakers	1	77	119	(64.71)	71	122	(58.20)
	2	35	64	(54.69)	35	48	(72.92)
	3	60	105	(57.14)	82	134	(61.19)
	4	47	75	(62.67)	59	73	(80.82)
	5	35	53	(66.04)	18	33	(54.55)
	6	39	79	(49.37)	76	107	(71.03)
	Mean of %			(59.10)			(66.45)

Table 1. 2. The Frequency of Encoded Act Occurrence

Interlocutors	Situation		Experimental Group			Control Group		
			N of Self-Produced Acts	N of All Acts	%	N of Self-Produced Acts	N of All Acts	%
Subjects	1		32	119	(26.9)	30	122	(24.6)
	2		26	64	(40.6)	4	48	(8.3)
	3		40	105	(38.1)	38	134	(28.4)
	4		21	75	(28.0)	9	73	(12.3)
	5		15	53	(28.3)	13	33	(39.4)
	6		26	79	(32.9)	16	107	(15.0)
	Total of 6 situations	Mean of %			(32.5)			(21.3)
		t test	$t(5)=1.848$, $p > .05$					
	Total of 5 situations	Mean of %			(33.3)*			(17.7)*
		t test	$t(4)=3.129$, $p < .05$					
Native Speakers	1		77	119	(64.7)	71	122	(58.2)
	2		35	64	(54.7)	35	48	(72.9)
	3		60	105	(57.1)	82	134	(61.2)
	4		47	75	(62.7)	59	73	(80.8)
	5		35	53	(66.0)	18	33	(54.5)
	6		39	79	(49.4)	76	107	(71.0)
	Mean of %				(59.1)			(66.5)

The data were analyzed to see in which of the three domains the communicative learning environment has enhanced student task performance (i.e., discourse-related, functional and formal domains). The discourse-related analysis was based on the degree of the subject's involvement in an interaction; the functional analysis was related to the distribution of the behavioral functions of encoded acts. The formal analysis was based on the degree of encoding, the proportion of the use of intra-sentential subcategories of encoded acts, the proportion of the use of inter-sentential subcategories of clause-containing moves, and the degree of grammatical accuracy.

Findings and discussion

The degree of involvement in an interaction

The degree of the subject's involvement in an interaction was calculated by dividing the total number of her encoded acts by the total number of acts she and the assigned NS produced (see Table 1.2). A *t* test showed that there was no statistically significant intergroup difference (*t*

(5) = 1.848, $p > .05$). Incidentally, it was found that one of the six situations, Situation 5, had an internal validity problem. In each situation, some kind of dilemma was supposed to happen during the negotiation; but this was not the case with Situation 5, where neither group faced any dilemma, and the conversation went smoothly, ending within a short period of time. A second t test, which did not include the data based on this situation, was done. This time, a significant intergroup difference was revealed (t (4) = 3.129, $p < .05$), indicating that the experimental group was more actively involved. It is speculated that the experimental group's superiority in interaction involvement would appear only if some dilemma occurs in their negotiation.

The distribution of behavioral functions

Another intergroup difference was investigated in the functional domain. Kumagai (1997, pp. 28-9) devised a classification scheme of 12 indices, one of which is applied for the present study, behavioral function. This index consists of seven categories: request for information, request for action, request for attention, provision of information, indication of recognition, establishment of interpersonal relations, and decisive declaration. All the encoded acts found in the transcript were placed into one of these categories. The subjects' oral production was sometimes interrupted by silence, hesitation and pauses, and these *empty* moves were excluded from this functional analysis. The proportion of their use was calculated by dividing the frequency of each category, which the subject produced, by the total number of her acts (see Table 2).

Table 2. The Distribution of Behavioral Functions

Categories of Behavioral Functions	Situation	Experimental Group: Frequency of Categories / No of Acts	Experimental Group: %	Control Group: Frequency of Categories / No of Acts	Control Group: %	t test
Request for Information	1	4 / 42	(9.5)	2 / 51	(3.9)	
	2	8 / 29	(27.6)	2 / 13	(15.4)	
	3	1 / 45	(2.2)	1 / 52	(1.9)	
	4	0 / 28	(0.0)	0 / 14	(0.0)	
	5	0 / 18	(0.0)	1 / 15	(6.7)	
	6	0 / 40	(0.0)	1 / 31	(3.2)	
	Mean of %		(6.6)		(5.2)	$t(5)=0.500$, $p>.05$
Request for Action	1	8 / 42	(19.0)	10 / 51	(19.6)	
	2	7 / 29	(24.1)	0 / 13	(0.0)	
	3	1 / 45	(2.2)	9 / 52	(17.3)	
	4	0 / 28	(0.0)	0 / 14	(0.0)	
	5	0 / 18	(0.0)	0 / 15	(0.0)	
	6	1 / 40	(2.5)	0 / 31	(0.0)	
	Mean of %		(8.0)		(6.2)	$t(5)=0.353$, $p>.05$
Request for Attention	1	2 / 42	(4.8)	3 / 51	(5.9)	
	2	0 / 29	(0.0)	0 / 13	(0.0)	
	3	0 / 45	(0.0)	3 / 52	(5.8)	
	4	1 / 28	(3.6)	1 / 14	(7.1)	
	5	0 / 18	(0.0)	0 / 15	(0.0)	
	6	0 / 40	(0.0)	0 / 31	(0.0)	
	Mean of %		(1.4)		(3.1)	$t(5)=-1.761$, $p>.05$

Provision of Information	1	16 / 42 (38.1)	8 / 51 (15.7)	
	2	11 / 29 (37.9)	2 / 13 (15.4)	
	3	25 / 45 (55.6)	18 / 52 (34.6)	
	4	20 / 28 (71.4)	9 / 14 (64.3)	
	5	8 / 18 (44.4)	5 / 15 (33.3)	
	6	23 / 40 (57.5)	10 / 31 (32.3)	
	Mean of %	(50.8)*	(32.6)*	$t(5)=6.111, p<.001$
Indication of Recognition	1	0 / 42 (0.0)	0 / 51 (0.0)	
	2	0 / 29 (0.0)	0 / 13 (0.0)	
	3	4 / 45 (8.9)	3 / 52 (5.8)	
	4	0 / 28 (0.0)	0 / 14 (0.0)	
	5	1 / 18 (5.6)	4 / 15 (26.7)	
	6	0 / 40 (0.0)	3 / 31 (9.7)	
	Mean of %	(2.4)	(7.0)	$t(5)=-1.232, p>.05$
Establishment of Relations	1	2 / 42 (4.8)	7 / 51 (13.7)	
	2	0 / 29 (0.0)	0 / 13 (0.0)	
	3	9 / 45 (20.0)	4 / 52 (7.7)	
	4	0 / 28 (0.0)	0 / 14 (0.0)	
	5	6 / 18 (33.3)	3 / 15 (20.0)	
	6	2 / 40 (5.0)	2 / 31 (6.5)	
	Mean of %	(10.5)	(8.0)	$t(5)=0.720, p>.05$
Decisive Declaration	1	0 / 42 (0.0)	0 / 51 (0.0)	
	2	0 / 29 (0.0)	0 / 13 (0.0)	
	3	0 / 45 (0.0)	0 / 52 (0.0)	
	4	0 / 28 (0.0)	0 / 14 (0.0)	
	5	0 / 18 (0.0)	0 / 15 (0.0)	
	6	0 / 40 (0.0)	0 / 31 (0.0)	
	Mean of %	(0.0)	(0.0)	-

A statistically significant difference was only recognized in comparing the category of the provision of information (t (5) = 6.111, p < .001). It was found that the experimental group provided more information than the control group. It should as well be pointed out that their provision of adequate information appropriate to the context, sometimes affected the NS's decision-making, which seldom happened in the discourse involving the control group. It suggests that a communicative learning environment enhances the learners' skill of providing information in terms of quantity, and possibly of quality, and such enhancement is manifested in the form of their provision of context-proper information. This claim is similar to conclusions made in Kitajima's study (1997) regarding the meaning-focused learners' use of context-dependent strategies.

The degree of encoding

The degree of encoding was calculated by dividing the total number of the subject's encoded acts by the total number of her acts (see Table 3). A statistically significant difference was observed (t (5) = 2.192, p < .05); the experimental group encoded their intentions more extensively than the control group. The communicative learning environment may have affected the improvement of encoding.

Table 3. The Degree of Encoding

	Experimental Group			Control Group		
Situation	N of Encoded Acts / N of Acts	%		N of Encoded Acts / N of Acts	%	
1	32 / 42	(76.2)		30 / 51	(58.8)	
2	26 / 29	(89.7)		4 / 13	(30.8)	
3	40 / 45	(88.9)		38 / 52	(73.1)	
4	21 / 28	(75.0)		9 / 14	(64.3)	
5	15 / 18	(83.3)		13 / 15	(86.7)	
6	26 / 40	(65.0)		16 / 31	(51.6)	
Mean of %		(79.7)*			(60.9)*	
t test	$*t(5) = 2.192, p < .05$					

The proportion of the use of intra-sentential subcategories of encoded acts

The proportion of the use of intra-sentential subcategories of encoded acts was calculated by dividing the frequency of each subcategory, which the subject produced, by the total number of her acts (see Table 4).

Table 4. The Frequencies of Occurrence of Intra-Sentential Subcategories of Encoded Acts

Intra-Sentential Subcategories of Encoded Acts	Situation	Experimental Group: Frequency of Subcategories / N of Acts	%	Control Group: Frequency of Subcategories / N of Acts	%	*t* test
Clause-Containing	1	17 / 42	(40.5)	10 / 51	(19.6)	
	2	16 / 29	(55.2)	3 / 13	(23.1)	
	3	11 / 45	(24.4)	14 / 52	(26.9)	
	4	11 / 28	(39.3)	4 / 14	(28.6)	
	5	2 / 18	(11.1)	2 / 15	(13.3)	
	6	12 / 40	(30.0)	5 / 31	(16.1)	
	Mean of %		(33.4)*		(21.3)*	$*t(5)=2.218, p<.05$
Minimal & Phrasal	1	5 / 42	(11.9)	4 / 51	(7.8)	
	2	1 / 29	(3.4)	0 / 13	(0.0)	
	3	9 / 45	(20.0)	6 / 52	(11.5)	
	4	5 / 28	(17.9)	1 / 14	(7.1)	
	5	2 / 18	(11.1)	2 / 15	(13.3)	
	6	7 / 40	(17.5)	2 / 31	(6.5)	
	Mean of %		(13.6)*		(7.7)*	$*t(5)=2.830, p<.05$
Formulaic Speech	1	10 / 42	(23.8)	16 / 51	(31.4)	
	2	9 / 29	(31.0)	1 / 13	(7.7)	
	3	20 / 45	(44.4)	18 / 52	(34.6)	
	4	5 / 28	(17.9)	4 / 14	(28.6)	
	5	10 / 18	(55.6)	9 / 15	(60.0)	
	6	7 / 40	(17.5)	9 / 31	(29.0)	
	Mean of %		(31.7)		(31.9)	$t(5)=-0.131, p>.05$

Clause-containing acts refer to those containing at least one clause. *Minimal acts* consist of one or two words; and *phrasal acts* include nominal, adverbial and verb phrases, and both are combined as one category for the sake of convenience. *Formulaic speech acts* are those containing ready-made sentence stems that can be memorized as wholes (for a review, see

Weinert, 1995), such as *Excuse me* and *Just a minute*. Such expressions as *Hello, Yes, I'm sorry* and *I beg your pardon*? are also included in this category. A statistically significant intergroup difference was found only in the proportion of the use of clause-containing acts and minimal/phrasal acts (t (5) = 2.218, $p < .05$; t (5) = 2.830, $p < .05$, respectively). It seems that the greatest improvement caused by communicative learning lies in learner *expressiveness* by means of clause-containing and minimal/phrasal acts.

The proportion of the use of inter-sentential subcategories of clause-containing moves

The proportion of the use of inter-sentential subcategories of clause-containing moves was calculated by dividing the frequency of each subcategory, which the subject produced, by the total number of her encoded moves (see Table 5).

Table 5. The Frequencies of Occurrence of Inter-Sentential Subcategories of Clause-Containing Moves

Inter-sentential Subcategories of Clause-Containing Moves	Situation	Experimental Group				Control Group				t test
		Frequency of Subcategories	/	N of Encoded Moves	%	Frequency of Subcategories	/	N of Encoded Moves	%	
Single Clause	1	12	/	32	(37.5)	8	/	30	(26.7)	
	2	7	/	26	(26.9)	3	/	4	(75.0)	
	3	7	/	40	(17.5)	12	/	38	(31.6)	
	4	2	/	21	(9.5)	2	/	9	(22.2)	
	5	3	/	15	(20.0)	1	/	13	(7.7)	
	6	4	/	26	(15.4)	6	/	16	(37.5)	
	Mean of %				(21.1)				(33.4)	$t(5)=-1.344$, $p>.05$
Coordination-Containing	1	3	/	32	(9.4)	3	/	30	(10.0)	
	2	5	/	26	(19.2)	0	/	4	(0.0)	
	3	4	/	40	(10.0)	1	/	38	(2.6)	
	4	4	/	21	(19.0)	1	/	9	(11.1)	
	5	0	/	15	(0.0)	1	/	13	(7.7)	
	6	6	/	26	(23.1)	0	/	16	(0.0)	
	Mean of %				(13.5)				(5.2)	$t(5)=1.734$, $p>.05$
Subordination-Containing	1	0	/	32	(0.0)	2	/	30	(6.7)	
	2	3	/	26	(11.5)	0	/	4	(0.0)	
	3	1	/	40	(2.5)	0	/	38	(0.0)	
	4	0	/	21	(0.0)	0	/	9	(0.0)	
	5	1	/	15	(6.7)	0	/	13	(0.0)	
	6	0	/	26	(0.0)	0	/	16	(0.0)	
	Mean of %				(3.5)				(1.1)	$t(5)=0.914$, $p>.05$

Single-clause moves are those in which only one clause is found. Coordination-containing moves refer to those which contain horizontal sequencing of clauses with connectors such as *and* and *but* intervening. Subordination-containing moves are those in which either subordination or complementation is embedded. No significant intergroup differences were found in the use of the subcategories. The groups did not differ proportion-wise in the use of clause-containing moves, producing few syntactically complex ones. This was the case even though the subjects were allowed to use dictionaries and get peer group assistance on-site. The mere provision of input and conversational interaction in communicative learning may be insufficient to develop the full range of syntactically complex structures (Swain, 1985, p. 252; Sato, 1988, p. 393).

The degree of grammatical accuracy

The degree of grammatical accuracy was calculated by dividing the total number of each subject's error-free minimal/phrasal and clause-containing encoded acts by the total number of her minimal/phrasal and clause-containing encoded acts (see Table 6).

Table 6. The Degree of Grammatical Accuracy

	Experimental Group				Control Group			
Situation	N of Error-Free Minimal/ Phrasal & Clause-Containing Encoded Acts		N of Minimal/Phrasal & Clause-Containing Encoded Acts	%	N of Error-Free Minimal/ Phrasal & Clause-Containing Encoded Acts		N of Minimal/Phrasal & Clause-Containing Encoded Acts	%
1	18	/	22	(81.8)	11	/	14	(78.6)
2	8	/	17	(47.1)	2	/	3	(66.7)
3	14	/	20	(70.0)	13	/	20	(65.0)
4	11	/	16	(68.8)	4	/	5	(80.0)
5	2	/	4	(50.0)	4	/	4	(100.0)
6	3	/	19	(15.8)	5	/	7	(71.4)
Mean of %				(55.6)				(76.9)
t test	$t(5)=-2.008$, $p>.05$							

There was no significant intergroup difference, but the experimental group's production tended to be less grammatically accurate than the control group's (55.6% and 76.9% respectively). One explanation for this tendency can be that the experimental group sustained their speech, thus creating more occasions for error making. In fact the average number of words per encoded act distinguished the two groups. As shown in Table 7, the experimental group produced 3.44 words per encoded act and the control group 2.80, and this intergroup difference is a statistically significant one ($t(5) = 2.853$, $p < .05$).

Table 7. The Number of Words per Encoded Act

	Experimental Group				Control Group			
Situation	N of Words		N of Encoded Acts	N of Words per Encoded Act	N of Words		N of Encoded Acts	N of Words per Encoded Act
1	99	/	32	(3.09)	93	/	30	(3.10)
2	124	/	26	(4.77)	15	/	4	(3.75)
3	121	/	40	(3.03)	103	/	38	(2.71)
4	84	/	21	(4.00)	27	/	9	(3.00)
5	29	/	15	(1.93)	23	/	13	(1.77)
6	99	/	26	(3.81)	40	/	16	(2.50)
Mean				(3.44)*				(2.80)*
t test	*$t(5)=2.853$, $p<.05$							

Another possible explanation is that the experimental group was more message-conscious, whereas the control group was more concerned about form, and this priority difference may have affected grammatical accuracy. At least, it can be argued that communicative learning has not yielded more positive contributions to grammatical accuracy than traditional learning.

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Conclusion

Some evidence indicates that communicative learning does enhance student performance but not the way it has been generally assumed and expected, i.e., making them fluent like NSs. Identified here as its direct effects are more active involvement in an interaction, provision of richer information, greater degree of encoding and more extensive use of clause-containing and minimal/phrasal acts. Ironically, such formal aspects as grammatical accuracy and structural complexity, on which school language pedagogy has traditionally placed more emphasis, are less likely to show radical improvement. Hopefully, these discoveries will be reflected in the revision of the curriculum content and the evaluation system.

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Appendix 1. Strategic Interaction

The procedure for Strategic Interaction has three stages: the Rehearsal Stage, the Performance Stage and the Debriefing Stage. During the Rehearsal Stage, the participants discuss and negotiate the problem-solving strategies and discuss which functional expressions are applicable to a given situation and which communicative expressions might be applicable or not. Each group will select one or two members to perform the scenario in front of all the participants. During the Performance Stage, the performers are encouraged to talk freely with each other to solve the dilemma which they face, and they are allowed to go back to their group at any time they wish to request assistance about what to say or how to say something that will solve the problem more quickly and more appropriately. During the Debriefing Stage, the participants will discuss, in a group, what they learned; i.e., the functional and communicative expressions used to solve the problem in the scenario (Based on Arena ,1996).

Appendix 2. An example of the scenarios used for the experiment

Situation 6: Won't Gain Weight?

Role A for the subject (an employee at a bakery):

You are working at a small bakery in a large shopping center. The boss told you that you would get a special bonus if all the items sold out three days in a row. Thanks to your effort, all the items sold out the last two days. By the way, low-calorie cakes are one of this bakery's specialties, which is in the newspaper advertisement. You have sold the entire supply for today except a couple of fattening ones. It is freezing and snowy outside. There have been few customers around. It's 20:50, and the closing time is 21:00. You are about to tell the boss honestly that you have to give up the bonus because of the bad weather. You then find someone coming in. Prepare yourself to sell the unsold cakes.

Role B for the NS (the last customer)

The doctor has put your boyfriend on a strict diet. He must not eat high-calorie desserts. Today is his birthday. You have made a promise to buy him something sweet but not with a lot of calories. You know he is looking forward to eating the cake you buy. You have been busy working all day, so you missed the chance to buy what you really wanted at the bakery where you usually go. It's now 20:50. There are few bakery shops open. You then remember that you saw an ad in the paper about a bakery in a large shopping center where low-calorie cakes are sold. You believe it is open till 21:00. You are rushing into the bakery. What would you say to the salesclerk?

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